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ABSTRACT

Parent involvement in their children's schooling results in improved student performance, attitudes, and self-concepts, along with decreased dropout, suspension, and absenteeism rates. Increased involvement also provides necessary community feedback to the school, encourages positive parent-teacher-student relations, and creates a more informed community. Compiled by the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association (SSTA) Research Centre, this guide serves as a resource for educators and school boards wishing to encourage parent and family involvement in education. The guide is comprised of two sections: "Setting the Stage" and "Policy Leadership." The first section details: (1) reasons for involving parents, families, and communities; (2) ways to improve school effectiveness; (3) the democratization of education; (3) school outreach; (4) policy directions; and (5) building of a learning community. The second section addresses: (1) policy development as a leadership process; (2) barriers to involvement; (3) encouragement of involvement through policy; and (4) "blueprints" for policy development. Policy samples from Saskatchewan schools are provided, along with a parent involvement program survey. A listing of 60 additional resources is included. (BGC)

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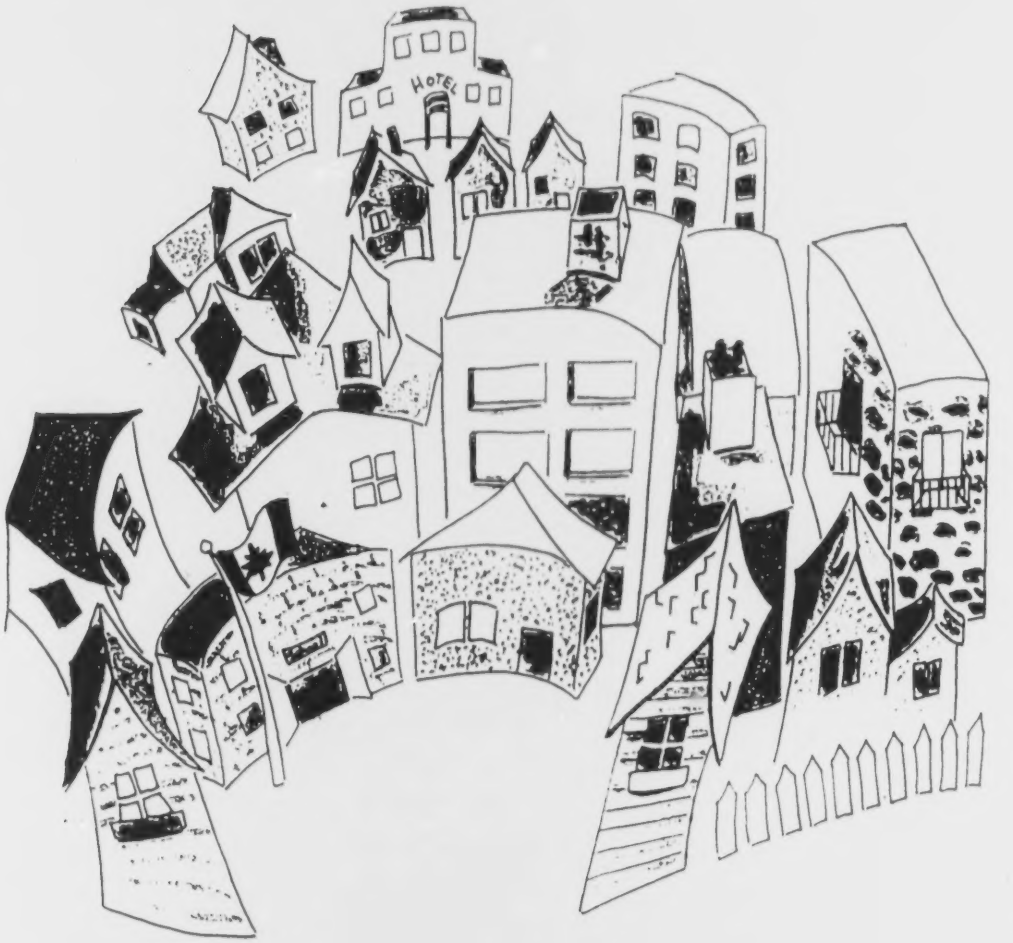
EXTENDING THE LEARNING COMMUNITY

Involving Parents and Families in Schools



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Extending the Learning Community

Involving Parents and Families in Schools

S.S.T.A. Research Centre Report #94-09

November, 1994

This handbook was developed by Mills Consulting under the auspices of the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association Research Centre. The opinions and recommendations expressed may or may not be in agreement with SSTA officers or trustees, but are offered as being worthy of consideration for making decisions.

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The process of producing this resource brought insight and understanding into the many dimensions of parent, family and community partnerships. Our hope is that you, too, will experience the process when developing a policy for your school division for it is truly the process of involvement and discussion that brings understanding and the building of bridges.

Many thanks to:

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and

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SETTING THE STAGE

Extending the Learning Community: Involving Parents and Families in Schools is a resource for educators and school boards wishing to encourage parent and family involvement in education.

"A Review of Directions" (Saskatchewan Education, Training and Employment, 1992) recommends that :

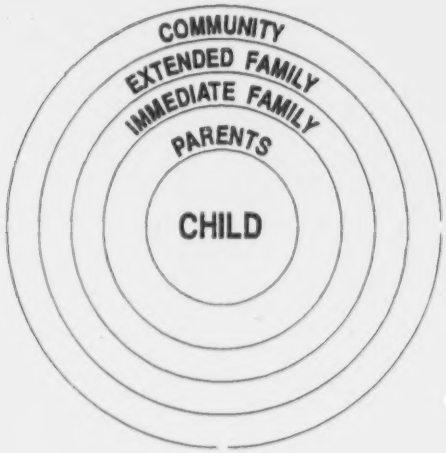
1. All schools in the province should develop strategies to expand parent and community involvement in education as one of the key elements of their school improvement plans. These strategies could build on existing structures by more effectively involving parent groups, local boards and advisory councils.
2. Strategies to improve parent and community involvement should promote active participation in setting school goals, introducing program changes and enhancing learning activities for students at home, in the community and during school hours. Partnerships should be the guiding concept rather than public relations.
3. The educational organizations should develop jointly an ongoing strategy for public involvement which would provide for the following:
   - the preparation of documents and other printed or audio visual materials to support new curricula and other initiatives. These documents would be for use by schools at the local level to communicate educational changes and involve parents and communities in the learning process of their children;
   - the development of various strategies to support parent and community involvement at the local

level, such as forums or "inservice" for parents on new educational developments; and

"Every parent has the right and responsibility to be involved in his or her child's education."

- the development of a regular process for discussing educational issues and changes underway in Saskatchewan with major interest groups such as business and labour, social action groups and the media.

"Communities are made up of families"



In this document, because not all our children are cared for directly by their parents, the term "parent" is implying the child's significant care-giver--mom, dad, grandparent, uncle, aunt, cousin, brother, sister, or special guardian.

The community is the wider envelope that is made up of parents, children, families, seniors, local businesses, and community associations.

Extending the Learning Community: Involving Parents and Families in Schools looks most specifically at parent and family involvement, as communities are made up of families.

Why Involve Parents, Families and Communities

There are many compelling reasons for involving parents, families, and members of communities in public education.

Let's examine the reasons for extending the learning community through policy leadership.

1 School Effectiveness

Chet is a high school senior. His parents regularly check on how things are going at school, inquire about assignments and grades, discuss post high school pursuits, and know about his daily activities.

According to the findings in a massive research study (Fehnmann et al., 1987), Chet will most likely score higher grades than his peers whose parents are not as involved in their children's lives.

The dinner is cleared away and the books come out. Sisters and brothers, mother and father sit down to do the daily homework. In this Asian refugee family everyone works together on the lessons, siblings helping and teaching one another, while parents learn with their children, set goals and expectations for the evening's studies and take care of practical considerations.

Studies of 200 refugee families in the United States (Caplan et al., 1992) indicated that homework dominates the household activities on week nights. This results in improved achievement in the classroom.

The power of parent-school partnerships can be seen in Tennessee's statewide effort in which 11 models of parent involvement in elementary schools were funded at 17 sites (Leuder, 1989a, 1989b). The models focused on such topics as "active parenting" (training sessions for parents), "new parents as teachers" (a program for teenage parents), "operation fail-safe" (parent-student-teacher conferences to raise student achievement), and "family math" (a program for parent and students to work together on math). Over 95% of the parents reported that they were more involved with their children's education; over 90% reported that their children's skills and overall attitudes had improved, and 81% perceived an improvement in their children's behavior (Lueder, 1989a, p. 17). In one project, for example, parent participation was considerable and resulted in significant increases in children's listening, reading, and math scores compared with two control groups of students (Lueder, 1989b).

Research shows us that time and again, children's attitudes towards school, their achievement, attendance, motivation, self-concept, and behaviors are directly influenced by the attitudes of their parents towards learning and school.

For at-risk students, parent and family involvement in learning has been identified as the single most important determinant of success.

Actively involving schools, families and community members in identifying issues, assessing the needs of the community, and developing solutions makes for more effective schools that can better meet the needs and expectations of its community.

In Peter Mortimore's and colleagues' (1988) major study of school effectiveness, parental involvement practices represented one of 12 key factors that differentiated effective schools from less effective schools.

> *"Our findings show parent involvement in the life of the school to be a positive influence upon pupils' programs and development. This included help in classrooms and on educational visits, and attendance at meetings to discuss children's progress. The headteacher's accessibility to parents was also important; schools operating an informal, open-door policy being more effective. Parent involvement in pupils' educational development within the home was also clearly beneficial. Parents who read to their children, heard them read, and provided them with access to books at home, had a positive effect upon their children's learning." (p. 255)*

Primarily but not exclusively successful schools are those in which parent and community involvement is not just tolerated, but encouraged

Berger, 1986

The involvement of parents and families as members of our larger community can only help to strengthen our schools. Saskatchewan has a proud history of schools being central to its communities and the families of the community being central to the schools. It is through continuing to actively involve and invite parents, families, and community members into the education system that we can hope to make the best possible schools for our children.

2 Democratization of Education

In recent years, schools and education have moved into the public spotlight of criticism and question.

- "Are schools meeting the needs of our youth and preparing them for work?"

- "Are our tax dollars being used wisely?"
- "Why does education cost so much?"

The growth in the number of students in private schools and the burgeoning interest in charter and home-based education also indicate that parents and families are becoming more interested and concerned about public schooling. They want to be more involved in their children's education and have some control.

Often those individuals with the most pointed questions and serious concerns about schools are those who have little or no contact with the schools of today. When families and community members are involved in schools they have an opportunity to gain a greater understanding of the challenges and achievements of the education system.

A study focusing on parents' attitudes and activity (Epstein, 1989) found that:

1. Parents report little involvement at the school itself. Many parents work full- or part-time and cannot come to the school building during the school day.
2. Parents in all of the schools in the sample were empathetic in wanting the schools and teachers to advise them about how to help their own children at home at each grade level.
3. Parents believe that the schools need to strengthen practices such as giving parents specific information on their children's major academic subjects and what their children are expected to learn each year.
4. Parents of young children and better educated parents conducted more activities at home that support their children's schooling.
5. Parents who are guided by teachers on how to help at home spend more minutes helping their children with homework than other parents.

6. Most important for policy and practice, parents' level of involvement is directly linked to the specific practices of the school that encourage involvement at school and guide parents in how to help at home. The data are clear that the school's practices to inform and involve parents are more important than parent education, family size, marital status and even grade level in determining whether even inner-city parents stay involved with their children's education through the middle grades.

(as reported in Fullan, 1991)

In a study conducted in 1986 by Joyce Epstein, she found that over 80% of the parents surveyed said they could spend more time helping children at home if they were shown how to do specific learning activities.

"Parents were aware of and responded positively to teachers' efforts to involve them in learning activities at home. Parents with children in the classrooms of teachers who built parent involvement into their regular teaching practice were more aware of teachers' efforts, received more ideas from teachers, knew more about their child's instructional program, and rated the teachers higher on interpersonal skills and overall teaching quality. Teachers' practices had consistently strong and positive effects on parent reactions to the school program and on parent evaluations of teachers' merits for parents at all educational levels. Teacher practices of parent involvement had more drastic, positive links to parents' reactions than general school to home communication or parent assistance at the school."

Our provincial neighbours have been making changes that further democratize their schools.

In Alberta, the government announced in January 1994 that parents could choose where they send their children to school and the dollars would follow the student. In addition, a site-based management model of governance would be established with government working closely with principals.

The government of Manitoba has developed a paper that is focussed on the role of parents including such topics as school-based management and school committees.

3 School Outreach

Students benefit from being involved in the wider community as they learn. Learning that is linked to "real life" is authentic and more meaningful to students. School outreach offers an opportunity for students to be involved in their communities and for communities to be involved with their youth in meaningful ways. The African proverb "It takes a whole community to raise a child" rings true today. The well-being of our children is a shared responsibility that requires the commitment and support of families, social and human services agencies, and business. Although schools are primarily places to learn, in some cases this learning is virtually impossible because of personal situations. Hunger, abuse, violence, family instability, substance abuse and neglect are very real barriers to learning that schools alone cannot surmount. The day has passed when we can waste valuable time and resources deciding whose responsibility it is when it is only through collaborative effort that we will be able to reduce, remove or get around these barriers.

In addition, Saskatchewan is facing significant economic challenges which require us to be innovative and creative, building on our historic strengths of cooperation and community. Even as the economic situation improves, it is imperative that communities

make the most efficient and effective use of provincial and community resources to meet their needs. Sharing facilities and resources within communities, drawing on the ideas and energy of all community and family members, and by involving volunteers are a few of the ways schools are making the best use of limited resources.

4 Saskatchewan Education, Training and Employment Policy Directions

The challenge of providing a high quality of education that prepares young people to contribute successfully as adults requires the commitment and involvement of family and community members together with the dedication and competence of professional educators. Family and community involvement and partnerships with schools are vital to the success of students and to the ongoing work and renewal of educational organizations.

Parent, family and community involvement in education is a key priority for Saskatchewan Education, Training and Employment. While this strategy was formally announced in ***Policy Directions for Secondary Education in Saskatchewan***, *the Minister's Response to the High School Review Advisory Committee Final Report,* there has been a move toward greater family and community involvement in education in Saskatchewan over the last number of years. This is evident in the following initiatives of Saskatchewan Education, Training and Employment and of the provincial government as a whole:

- **Saskatchewan's Action Plan for Children** - In June 1993, the Saskatchewan Government launched a province-wide initiative called *Children First: An Invitation to Work Together* (Creating Saskatchewan's Action Plan for children) to

encourage a concerted effort in the province for the protection and well-being of our children. A renewed and revitalized effort to more effectively engage family and community members in meaningful ways in education helps to ensure that the goals of Saskatchewan's Action Plan for Children are being met.

- **Integrated School-Linked Services** -- Initiated in 1993, Integrated School-Linked services is an initiative of the provincial government in partnership with the Saskatchewan education system. It encourages school divisions, schools, parents, community groups and agencies, and provincial and community human service agencies to work together toward removing barriers to learning for children. Barriers to learning can take many forms including poverty, hunger, family breakdown and violence, child neglect and abuse, and sexual or substance abuse all of which threaten children's ability to learn and to develop into caring, competent and contributing adults.

  The movement toward a more collaborative human service system and the planning and implementation of integrated services are based on community-identified needs and cooperative action at the community level. Communities identify the key players, develop and share leadership, identify needs and available resources, and determine the most appropriate mechanism and location for service delivery and supports.

- **Curriculum Initiatives** -- Curriculum initiatives such as granting students credit for out-of-school personal learning initiatives, locally modified and developed courses that include community content and focus, and the development of the career/ community explorations course take the classroom

into the community and bring the community into the classroom.

- **Indian and Metis Education Development Program (IMED)** -- The IMED program provides incentive grants to school divisions to support Indian and Metis education programming. Increased parent, family and community involvement is a key objective of the program and many schools have developed community partnerships as well as partnerships with First Nations reserves for funding and program and resource development and implementation.

- **Community Schools**-- The Community Schools program has been encouraging greater parent, family and community involvement in education since 1980. Each of the 17 Community Schools has a Community School Council with active parent and community representation. Community School Councils set school goals, identify issues and priorities for action, introduce program changes, solve problems and enhance learning activities for students at home, in the school and in the community. Parents, families and community members are involved in all aspects of the school program. Anticipated changes to the Community Schools program will strengthen the role of the community School Council.

Each of these initiatives signals a move toward greater parent, family and community involvement in education and the development of partnerships.

Saskatchewan Education, Training and Employment is committed to developing a policy statement and implementation strategy for enhanced parent, family and community involvement in education that facilitates their participation in setting school goals, introducing program changes, solving problems and

enhancing learning activities for students at home, in the school and in the community.

Saskatchewan Education, Training and Employment believes that parent, family and community involvement in education can take many forms including:

- creating opportunities for parents and caregivers to develop parenting skills and to develop an environment in the home that meets the basic family needs of health and safety and supports learning;

- providing parents with the knowledge and skills to assist their children in learning at home and at school. This may include information on what the children are learning in school, suggested activities to be completed at home that support what children are learning in school, and programs such as family literacy;

- accessing and participating in the coordination of community resources such as health, social, justice, nutrition and recreation services and programs;

- establishing effective communication between parents or caregivers and the school regarding their children's learning and development as well as communication between the families, community and the school regarding school programs;

- inviting parents and community members into the classroom, drawing on their strengths and expertise and, in turn, extending students' learning into the community -- moving beyond field trips to work experience, community service work, and job shadowing.

- establishing appropriate mechanisms to enable parents, families and community members to participate in school planning, decision making and problem solving through elected or appointed councils.

Efforts to involve families and community members cover a continuum of involvement activities with an increasing level of collaboration and shared responsibility and authority.

There are many ways, with varying degrees of responsibility and authority, that parents and community members can be involved in education. The type of involvement and level of responsibility will vary from school to school depending on the needs of the community, wishes, ability and willingness of parents, families, and community members, values and resources.

Parents, family and community members play significant roles in the lives of children and their involvement in education is important for several reasons including:

- enhancing children's opportunities for success in school and in life;

- strengthening the capacity of schools to provide quality education services which meet the needs and expectations of the community by actively involving students, families and community members in identifying issues, assessing the needs of the community, and developing solutions;
- encouraging the commitment and support of all members of the community including families, social and human service agencies that is needed to effectively address barriers to learning;
- responding to public demand for a stronger voice in education planning and decision-making; and
- making the best use of limited resources by sharing facilities and resources within communities.

Where parents are actively involved in schools:

- Student performance is improved (Snodgrass, 1991)
- Student attitudes and self-concept are more positive (Henderson, 1987)
- Student dropout rates are lower (Peterson, 1989)
- Student absenteeism is decreased (Tangri and Moles, 1987)
- Suspension rates are lower (Christenson and Cleary, 1990)
- Opportunities for at-risk students improve (Stallings and Stipek, 1986)
- Student, teacher and parent perceptions of classroom climate are more positive (Haynes, Comer and Hamilton-Lee, 1989)
- Teachers indicate greater satisfaction with their work (Christenson and Cleary, 1990)
- Parents are more understanding of school issues (Christenson and Cleary, 1990)
- Schools are rated as more effective (Epstein, 1988)

Parent involvement also:

- Provides feedback to the school from the community
- Encourages positive parent-teacher-student relations and three way communication
- Shows support for the teacher and the school and the importance of education
- Promotes participation in the school
- Provides an opportunity for children to feel supported and confident in their role as a "student"
- Creates a more informed community

In recent studies of the public opinions related to schools, "parents" of students were one of the most supportive and positive groups. Groups that had no relation or connection to schools were the most critical of schools today.

When parents are involved in their children's classrooms, they are more supportive of the teachers and the school. They are more positive and less fearful. They see the realities of today's schools, and become familiar with new curricula and teaching methods. Parents can support what they understand.

Teachers can benefit from the insights of the parent and parents can benefit from the insights of the teacher. Ultimately, involvement means that the child benefits.

Parents and Schooling in the 1990s (Flaxman & Enger, 1991) indicated five primary principles that apply to parent involvement in schools:

1. Involving parents in their children's education improves student achievement and behavior, but

parent involvement is most effective when it is comprehensive, well planned, and long-lasting.

2. Parent involvement develops over time as an integral part of a school improvement or restructuring strategy, rather than a remedial intervention.

3. The benefits of parent involvement are not confined to early childhood or the elementary grades. There are strong, positive effects from involving parents continuously through high school.

4. Parents do not have to be well educated themselves in order to help.

5. Children from low income and minority families benefit greatly when schools involve parents.

This resource document provides information necessary to create policy that involves parents and family members in schools.

Shorten the distance between home and school . . . communicate.

POLICY LEADERSHIP

Policy Development As A Leadership Process

School board policy serves several functions. Policy development is best viewed as a change process.

At the classroom and school level, parent and community involvement may be occurring because individual teachers or the school staff are exploring new, promising practices. However, individual efforts cannot succeed over time without supportive school board policy leadership. The challenge for school systems lies in implementing and institutionalising effective approaches in all schools. Effective policy leadership is a way of taking effective practice and making it available for all students in all schools.

Writing a new policy does not guarantee change in practice or parent support. Policy leadership requires the combined efforts of trustees, students, teachers and the community. This will be more likely to happen if policy development is treated as a process - an opportunity to begin an ongoing dialogue with the community - rather than as an end in itself. The process of developing the policy may be more important than the policy itself for it is the process that develops awareness, interest, and ownership. The resulting policy then reflects commonly understood and supported practice.

An effective policy provides the vision--clear direction--with room for choice in the actions taken. The emphasis is

on achieving a successful outcome rather than mandating the vehicle that will take you there.

Policy that is developed behind closed doors, then laid on will do little to model or encourage the attitude that is needed to open the school to the wider community.

The process used to develop the policy is the first step in creating a climate that encourages openness and fosters a positive approach. Policy that is developed behind closed doors, then laid on will do little to model or encourage the attitude that is needed to open the school to the wider community. The classroom has the potential to be an isolated island--opening the door is an important step.

Knowing your community, the current situation, and having vision provides the base for a policy that increases involvement within the unique context of your community.

What is Parent Involvement?

Ideal parent and family involvement varies with each school community; there is no one right answer. The answer that is right for your community is the one that works. Throughout the document and appendix you will find ideas that have worked for others. They may be inspirational as your policy process begins.

> *Shirley Adams is always at the school. She helps in the library. She is the room mother for all of her children. She is president of the Home and School Association. She drives for any class trip. Oh -- and she often leaves delicious recess snacks in the staff room when they seem to be needed most.*

> *The Browns talk to their children at home about school. They look at their homework. They read the school newsletters. They sign report cards. They can be counted on to turn up at parent-teacher interviews.*

> *Ann Blake works full-time. She doesn't have time to come to the school. She is tired. And*

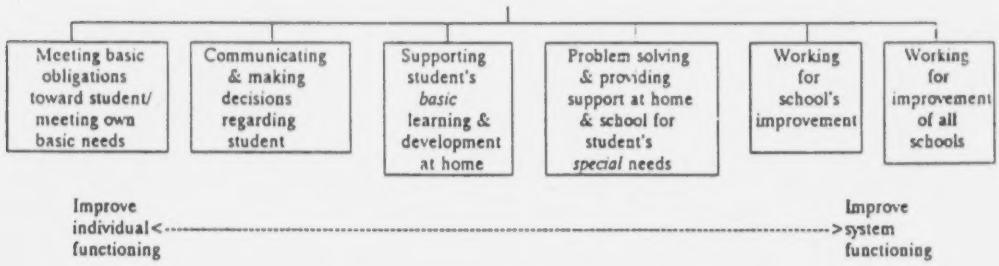
she needs support herself, for raising her three young children on her own. However, she has talked with her employer about the importance of family and community partnerships in education. Her employer often contributes surplus resources to the school and encourages work experience placements.

Every once in a while Mr. Smith storms in and demands to know why his child was kept after school. After a few stormy sessions, Mr. Smith can also be counted on to help with special events and programs.

The Johnson children used to come to school sporadically. Some days they were late. Some days they were hungry; some days they were tired. Since Gramma moved in the children attend much more regularly. The family makes use of the breakfast program and the school's clothing depot.

Consider these brief case studies as they relate to the following continuum:

Continuum of Types of Home Involvement


Meeting basic obligations toward student/ meeting own basic needs
Communicating & making decisions regarding student
Supporting student's *basic* learning & development at home
Problem solving & providing support at home & school for student's *special* needs
Working for school's improvement
Working for improvement of all schools
Improve individual functioning
Improve system functioning

Intervening to Enhance Involvement in Schools, Vol. 29, No. 5, May 1994

Some parents involve themselves in their children's educations in other ways, outside of the public system.

Mr. and Mrs. Smith have decided to move their children to a private school in the area. They feel that the private school offers a better education for their children.

The Jones children are educated at home.

Involvement takes many different forms and means different things to different people.

"Today I helped out in my son's kindergarten class. I helped children print their stories, cleared the craft table, fetched the film projector, baked a cake and served it, kept the activities area stocked, and helped children get dressed at recess. I talked to the teacher about my son's interest in building a playhouse, and followed up on comments made on his report card.

Today I also followed up on a proposal made to our local school board for an alternative program for primary-aged children. Later in the day I met with other parents interested in organizing a community spring festival.

My son and I also read stories after visiting the library today. We emptied his backpack and went over the things he brought home from kindergarten. We also read the school newsletter together. At suppertime we played adding and subtracting games with our vegetables. And before bed we read a few more stories."

This case study illustrates several ways in which a parent might be involved in their child's education.

- Family outings to the library
- Reading stories and books together
- Reviewing school work
- Planning community group activities
- Exploring program options
- Playing games together
- Sharing school news

All of these things indicate to the child that the parent is interested in school and thinks that it is important.

More specifically, parent involvement can be categorized in the following way: (Epstein, 1989):

- **Parenting**

  Parenting would include such things as providing for physical and emotional needs, discipline, a climate that nurtures the development of self-esteem and social skills, self-esteem, social skills, security, understanding, providing well balanced meals and making sure that the child gets enough sleep. Providing a healthy, stable environment enables children to get the most from their education.

- **Communicating**

  This would include things such as reading newsletters at home, attending parent/teacher conferences, commenting on students' work when it is sent home, talking to teachers and school when "challenges" arise and when good things are happening, and enquiring about school activities.

- **Volunteering**

  Volunteering includes driving for class trips, helping at school, chaperoning dances, working in

the library, being a room parent, doing photocopying or fundraising, flooding the hockey rink or tying skates, warming up the computers in the classroom, or providing an opportunity for work experience in the community.

- **Learning at Home**

  This would include things like helping with homework and projects, arranging educational family trips and outings, reading to children regularly, and playing games together.

- **Advocating for and with Other Parents**

  Representing other parents includes being on the Parent/Teacher Association or Home and School Association, being a member of an advisory council or committee, working with an independent advocacy group or being a local or division board member.

Parents must be allowed to pursue involvement in ways that are appropriate to their needs. Parents may have concerns at different levels. For example:

1. Individual

If an individual parent has a personal concern about a particular instance involving their child, it is most appropriate to approach the teacher or principal directly to discuss concerns.

2. Parent Group

Involvement regarding broader issues such as curriculum, school climate or policies regarding behaviour, are most appropriately handled through a parent group.

The importance of having a parent group cannot be understated. The objective of the parent group can vary from school to school; however, the underlying objective should be the well-being of all students.

A strong parent group can:

- create and maintain good communication between students, parents and teachers
- support the school, helping to improve the quality of education
- identify needs of the particular school and communicate concerns and recommendations to the school board
- inform parents of new ideas in education
- encourage and expand community involvement in educational affairs
- utilize the resources of the community to support new programs
- raise funds to be used for the betterment of the school, families and community
- coordinate volunteer efforts

Parent involvement must or should be encouraged; but all involvement whether individual or part of a group must be governed by a parent's code of ethics (Appendix C).

Points of Contrast Between "Pseudo-Involvement" and "Meaningful" Involvement of Parents

Pseudo-Involvement	Meaningful Involvement
1. is driven by political motives	-- is driven by educational motives
2. is directed at school or teacher needs	-- is directed at the needs of the child
3. assumes that home and school are independent	-- assumes that home and school are interdependent
4. assumes that parents already know enough about the school and that teachers already know enough about the home	-- assumes that parents need to be educated about the school and that teachers need to be educated about the home
5. is viewed as a means of maintaining the status quo, reducing conflict	-- is viewed as an important vehicle for school improvement
6. is based upon brief, ritualized, impersonal communication between school and home	-- is based upon sustained and free communication between school and home

(Renihan & Renihan, 1993)

Renihan and Renihan (1991) explore these modes of parental participation through the lense of school effectiveness to provide examples of ways in which parents can be involved in schools.

Alternative Parental Activities According to School Effectiveness Indicators and Models of Involvement
Modes of Parental Involvement
(Renihan & Renihan, 1991)

Effectiveness Variable	Spectators	Supporters	Advisors	Collaborators
Leadership	Leadership issues profiled only at times of succession and crisis.	• reinforcement of school leadership initiatives in the home • occasional involvement in direction setting.	-occasional provision of feedback regarding school leadership.	• active involvement in matters such as administrative succession, planning, and goal setting.
Academic Focus	Receipt of information. Report Cards Attendance at Parent-teacher interviews.	• Assistance with extra-curricular and co-curricular activities. • Limited involvement in academic programs.	• Provision of opinion on curriculum needs and curriculum change and adaptation.	• Active involvement on committees specifically initiated to review/evaluate curricula.
Expectations	Occasional receipt of information re: grading philosophy and standards.	• Provision of limited support to school's assignments.	• Occasional relaying of student reactions to school.	• Clarification and alignment of standards of school and home regarding student performance.
Climate	Occasional "observations" of school climate: a) on visits to school, b) from second hand accounts.	• Involvement in school 'spirit' activities.	• Occasional relaying of student reactions to school.	• Active, visible, parental involvement in life of the school.

continued on next page . . .

Effectiveness Variable	Spectators	Supporters	Advisors	Collaborators
Motivation	Parents encouraged to motivate students separate from the school based initiatives.	• Parental support for motivational strategies of teachers.	• Direct concrete feedback to school regarding student morale, etc.	• Joint examination of motivational possibilities for enhancing achievement.
Mission	Parents sporadically informed about such things as school mission and planned goals.	• Knowledge of mission development from peripheral involvement.	• Provision of advice on school mission at parent-teacher interviews, etc.	• Active involvement in goal-setting and in related inservice activities.
Participative Decision-Making	Receipt of information via student word of the mouth, or newsletter.	• Parents occasionally provided with information from surveys, opinionnaires, etc.	• Occasional lobby of school officials on key issues.	• On-going active share in decision-making activities related to all areas.
Feedback on Student Performance	Occasional exposure to grading methods via student work and report cards or by teachers when accountability is required.	• Reinforcement of evaluation methods promulgated by professional staff.	• Occasional soliciting and relaying of reactions to marking philosophy, etc.	• Clarification and alignment of standards and constant communication of progress toward prestated academic goals.

When determining levels of involvement in decision-making, consider:

1. How much stake do the parents have in the decision?
2. Do they have the expertise to allow them to meaningfully contribute to the decision?

The point is made that when people have both a high stake in the decision and a relatively high level of expertise in the area in which the decision is made, they should always be involved.

If they have a high stake in the decision but a low level of expertise, they should be involved as much as possible, and receive the appropriate training to increase the level of expertise so they can contribute in a meaningful way.

When both the stake in the decision and the ability to contribute in a meaningful way are low, then the need for involvement is also low.

Renihan, 1993

Policy Development

IDENTIFY THE NEED

What kinds of involvement of the parents and families in your community currently occurs?

-
-
-
-

In what ways might involvement be extended?

WHY

1. Is there a need for increased involvement? Why?

2. Is there a need for a policy that encourages increased involvement? Why?

Barriers to Involvement

When planning for involvement, it is important to recognize barriers. The following barriers have been identified by educators and parents in Saskatchewan.

- Lack of time and opportunity
- Poor communication between school and home
- Fear of conflict/intimidation experienced by parents and teachers
- Superficial, unauthentic involvement
- Personal circumstances of parents
- Lack of perceived value in parental contributions
- Uncooperative administrators
- Unclear expectations
- Student pressure: "Not cool" for parents to be involved
- Lack of informative feedback on student performance
- Mistrust
- Insecurity
- Defensiveness on the part of both teachers and parents
- Past negative experiences in school
- Disinterest
- Educators do not know how to involve parents in education--curricular decisions, instructional plans, school management issues or support at home.
- A repeated theme in the Ferré study (Saskatchewan, 1992) is that of educators protecting their professional role by believing that

IDENTIFY BARRIERS

In what ways might involvement be blocked in your school division?

"Power must be shared, but the use of power must be learned."

SSTA Forum Participant

the role of parents is that of receiving information once decisions are made. On the other hand, parents surveyed by Ferré believe that they should be able to provide suggestions to teachers before decisions are made in addition to being kept informed.

> *"Parents seeking more input into decision-making are stymied by teachers who perceive their autonomy, turf, and professionalism, are being challenged."*
>
> (National Coalition of Advocates for Student Board of Enquiry, cited in Fraser, 1988, p. 47; Ferré, 1992)

A substantial barrier to parent involvement that is more than token and moves into parents as partners is perhaps the firmly rooted belief that education is best run by professionals rather than as a democratic process that involves all parties with a vested interest.

> *"Parents are like shareholders in a company without the opportunity to attend the shareholders' meeting."*
>
> (Parent, Ferré Study, 1992)

Addressing Barriers

Ferré (1992) suggests that "educators may wish to make an effort to examine, and further, to reduce the professionalism barriers that are sometimes used to obstruct parental involvement in certain educational matters." (p. 208).

Ferré (1992) further suggests, implications for further practice to reduce barriers might include:

1. Boards of Education may consider inviting parents to express their views and offer suggestions regarding the educational programs within school divisions;
2. Central office administrations may consider encouraging parent-school communication throughout their school divisions;

3. Central office administration may consider exploring feasible ways of soliciting parent suggestions in certain areas of decision-making;

4. The development of policies and guidelines for involving parents in school matters could involve both educator and parent representation and participation;

5. Roles for parents in school decision-making should be made clear to parents and educators;

6. Administrators could develop ways of enhancing home and school communication;

7. Classroom teachers could be encouraged to fully and effectively communicate pertinent classroom information to parents; and

8 Educators may wish to make an effort to examine, and further, to reduce the professionalism barriers that are sometimes used to obstruct parental involvement in certain educational matters.

"Everyone has something special to contribute in the learning community."

Encouraging Involvement Through Policy

Policy examples from across Canada illustrate ways in which school boards have addressed the challenge of overcoming barriers to parent involvement through policy leadership while providing the necessary framework on which schools can build.

For example, a Saskatchewan school has a school level program aimed at enhancing the partnership with parents. This school has identified five levels of school and parent cooperation (an outline of the entire program can be found in Appendix B.)

"1. Parents support conditions at home that support learning; support programs and workshops

2. Parents and other volunteers assist in the classrooms, Resource Centre and other parts of the

ENCOURAGING . . .

In what ways is involvement currently encouraged in your school division?

school. Parents may attend events the school schedules. Such events are usually scheduled at times that will be most convenient to parents.

4. *Teachers guide and assist parents so they can coordinate home learning activities with school instruction. The school offers homework support and other services to assist parents in helping their children succeed.*

5. *The school involves and trains parents and community in decision-making as well as in school governance."*

(Pilot Butte School)

Regina Public School Board, for example, has developed a parent involvement committee that has been active in organizing a parent convention that was highly successful. (Appendix A)

Wood River School Division has also been active in developing policy around school and community involvement with a more specific goal of involving parents. (The proposed policy is Policy Sample #1 with a complete information package included in Appendix A.)

The following policy samples are included as discussion starters and idea sparkers.

Policy Sample #1

SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS
Policy Topic: PARENTS

The Board of Education strongly supports the connection between parental involvement and student learning. It believes that if parental involvement is connected to student learning, there will be a resultant growth in student achievement. With that philosophy in mind, the Board states the following:

1. Each teacher shall hold an informational meeting for the parents of the students he/she is teaching before October 15 of any school year. For schools on the semester system there is an option of holding one meeting in the fall to address both semesters or one in the fall before October 1 to address the first semester and another meeting before March 1 to deal with the second semester. (Students may be invited to this meeting.)

   Topics to be addressed at this meeting shall include but not be restricted to the following:

   (a) Classroom expectations.

   (b) Curriculum to be covered during the course of the year.

   (3) Instructional and evaluation strategies to be used and an explanation of those strategies.

   (d) A discussion of how parents can support the instructional and extracurricular programs in the school.

2. The Board believes that continuous communication with parents, related to curriculum and instruction and how parents can help their children in school, is important during the course of the school year.

The following framework supports such communication.

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(a) Teachers shall, during the course of the year, keep parents informed of the topics and themes being taught in the classroom and how parents can help with those topics or themes at home.

(b) Teachers should, from time to time, host workshops during the school year to help parents become familiar with new teaching strategies and curriculum initiatives. (These workshops may involve students.)

(c) Teachers shall provide the opportunity for parents to have contact with them more frequently than during formal parent/teacher/student interviews to discuss such topics as how a student could benefit by cooperation between home and school.

(d) Teachers should organize several homework activities that involve parent and student together. Class newsletters or teacher newsletters to parents are strongly encouraged.

(e) Parents are encouraged to contact their child(ren)'s teacher(s) throughout the school year.

3. Parental input on curriculum choices is something which the Board believes can be helpful, if it takes the form of advice, and if it is offered in an atmosphere of support and concern. (Student input may also be sought.)

   With this in mind the following is recommended.

   (a) During the parent meeting at the beginning of the school year or some other appropriate occasion, parental input should be sought on theme and course offerings which may be optional. Teachers are asked to present parents with options as frequently as possible.

4. The Board strongly recommends the use of parent/student/teacher interviews. It is believed that the connection of all three parties, at least for a portion of the interview, can be a positive force. April 1994

(Wood River School Division)

Policy Sample #2

Parent Observation of Classes

POLICY

Parents and/or legal guardians shall be welcomed to observe their child's class in accordance with an appropriate procedure which protects the learning atmosphere for all students.

Administrative regulations and procedures

1. Parents and/or legal guardians wishing to observe their children in the elementary classrooms should discuss the reasons for the visitation with the teacher where possible at least 24 hours in advance of the visit. The teacher shall discuss the visit with the Principal.
2. Parents and/or legal guardians wishing to observe their children in the secondary classroom should discuss the reasons for the visit with the Principal where possible at least 24 hours in advance of the visit. The Principal shall discuss the visit with the teacher.
3. The timing of the Parent/Guardian visitation will depend upon:
   - A. the learning activity in progress
   - B. the disruption to the classroom
   - C. the sensitivities of the students
   - D. the number of requests
   - E. the urgency
4. Such requests for visitations shall not be unreasonably denied.
5. All visitors shall notify the office when they enter and leave the school.
6. Observation by persons other than the parent or guardian shall be made via the Principal in consultation with the teacher.

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Policy Sample #3

PARENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEES

It shall be the Policy of the Board that:

Parent Consultative Committees should:

(a) have the opportunity to exist in every school;

(b) encourage dialogue between school and community;

(c) have the opportunity for input to school-based decisions;

(d) have access to information regarding school programmes, policies, procedures and operations;

(e) encourage schools to recognize and utilize community talent and resources;

(f) encourage continued parent group and community involvement within each school and from K - 12;

(g) function in accordance with democratic principles.

Rationale: The Board of School Trustees believes that parent and community involvement is an essential ingredient to effective schools.

Policy Sample #4

SCHOOL COUNCILS
POLICY

The Board of Education believes in the involvement of parents and other interested members of the community in the operation of their school. Parents of students attending a school may establish School Councils for that purpose.

GUIDELINES

1. The decision to establish a School Council shall be made at an open parent meeting by a majority vote of the parents present.
2. The Principal of each school shall call a general meeting of the parents of students attending the school for the purpose of establishing a School Council. Notice of the meeting, including the purpose and time of the meeting, shall be shared with parents using available channels of communication.
3. Parents of students attending the school must comprise the majority of members on that School Council. The Principal of the school or designate is, ex officio, a member of the School Council.
4. Bylaws governing membership, voting privileges, scheduling of meetings and other operational considerations of the School Council are to be set by the School Council, and shall be filed with the Board for information. School Councils are subject to existing Board policies and to the precepts of the prevailing School Act.
5. The establishment of a School Council does not preclude the establishment or continuation of any other parent-school organization at a school.
6. School Councils shall have access to the Board through the Principal of the school or through the Superintendent of Schools.

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7. A School Council may be dissolved at any time upon the majority vote of the School Council members attending a duly posted meeting. The Notice of Dissolution should be directed in writing to the Principal of the school and the Board.
8. If a School Council is dissolved during the school year, the formation of a new School Council will be examined in the next school year.

Policy Sample #5

VISITORS TO THE SCHOOLS

I. GENERAL PUBLIC

The School Board encourages parents and other citizens of the district to visit the schools and classrooms at any time to observe the work of the students, teachers, and other employees. The Board believes that there is no better way for the public to learn what the school actually is doing.

1. In order to assure that no unauthorized persons enter the school with wrongful intent, all visitors will report to the school office when entering, sign the visitor's register, and receive authorization to visit elsewhere in the building. (This policy does not apply when parents have been invited to a classroom, assembly or school program.)
2. Any unauthorized person on school property will be reported to the Principal. The person will be asked to leave. The police may be called if the situation warrants.

II. SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

Members of the School Board are encouraged to visit the district schools and supportive departments. Such visits should be made in accordance with the following guidelines:

1. School visits should be scheduled through the building Principal.
2. The Principal or available staff member will accompany the Board member on the visit if the member so desires.
3. Such visits shall be for the purpose of becoming acquainted with school programs, personnel, operation and facilities.
4. A Board member will not give directions, or make suggestions to personnel during the visit. If a school visit leaves a Board member with a concern, this

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concern should be addressed through appropriate channels, i.e. - discussed with the Principal and/or the Chief Executive Officer.

5. A Board member may also visit a school as a parent, and in such instances will follow the policy as noted in Part I above. The member should make his status clear at the beginning of the visit. Reports on parental visits as such will not be made by members to the Board.

III. INVITED GUESTS

Inasmuch as the community contains a wealth of experience, expertise and knowledge which can be employed by the effective teacher, invited guests should be more than welcome (in appropriate numbers) in the classroom.

1. Teachers planning to invite guests to the classroom should inform the Principal and obtain approval.
2. Arrangements should be made to receive the guest in an hospitable and courteous manner.
3. If a controversial issue is to be considered in the classroom setting, reasonable efforts shall be made to see that all appropriate viewpoints are represented in a fair and reasonable fashion.
4. If any "high profile" persons are expected to visit the school, appropriate central office personnel should be advised.

Policy Sample #6

COMMUNITY RESOURCE PERSONS

The Board encourages the enrichment of curriculum and the widening of educational horizons by inviting persons or groups from outside the school with special knowledge or talents to address students, provided that in the opinion of the school, such contribution is relevant to the educational programs and does not interfere with the objectivity of the school.

The time taken by the resource person or groups and the limitations imposed by the necessity to schedule the regular program of studies must be considered when arranging for visits.

Approval for each visit or program must be given by the principal of the school concerned. Programs of an on-going nature must have the prior approval of the superintendent or his/her designate, and must be reported to the Board.

It is expected that speakers or programs which, in the opinion of the superintendent, may be controversial will be reported to the Board prior to their commencement.

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Policy Sample #7

POLICY: MISSION STATEMENT

For thousands of years parents taught their children through the activities of their daily lives. Children learned the skills they needed to survive and the values they needed to live in harmony within their families, their community and with the land. Our people took pride in passing on our knowledge, skills and values to our children and in the excellence of their education, our survival as a people was assured.

In this century we became dependent on the government and the church to educate our children and in this loss of control, we find that our families, the community, language and culture are threatened. Our very survival as a people is at stake. Thus . . .

We, the members of the Board of Education are committed to the development of an educational system that will return control of education to the parents, support them in their task as the first educators of their children, and teach the knowledge and skills our children need to survive today, and the values they need to live in harmony with their families, our community and our land.

Policy Sample #8

HOME AND SCHOOL ASSOCIATIONS

Policy

The Board of School Trustees will cooperate fully with Home and School Associations in the District and encourages the regular meetings of teachers with parents, either on a group or individual basis, whichever best fulfils the individual school's need.

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Policy Sample #9

PRELIMINARY DEVELOPMENT OF POLICIES

While it is the perogative of the Board to determine and adopt District policies, the Board encourages input from the public at large, students, parents and staff members.

Any interested party within the District may submit written proposal(s) for new or revised policies. Such proposal(s) shall be forwarded to the Secretary Treasurer for consideration by the Board.

In instances where a policy proposal will impact upon any of the collective agreements under negotiations, decisions on the proposal will be deferred until completion of the negotiations.

Policy Sample #10

4.1 PHASE ONE - IDENTIFICATION OF POLICY ISSUES:

PUBLIC

TRUSTEES

BOARD EMPLOYEES
MINISTRY

COMMITTEE OF CHAIR

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

(PRE-POLICY PLANNING AND 1ST PRIORITY SETTING)

ADMINISTRATION ALIGNS THE NEW POLICY PRIORITIES WITH THE LONG-RANGE PLAN

BOARD APPROVES THE PLAN TO DEVELOP POLICY IN SPECIFIC AREA(S)

4.1.1 The identification of the need for a Board Policy may be initiated by the following groups:

Trustees
Public (parents, students, community)
Ministry of Education
Other Governments (Federal, Provincial, Municipal)
Board Employees

To initiate the development, review or revision of policy, the formal process must be followed.

4.1.2 All policy initiation requests are received by the Director of Education who forwards them to Committee of Chair. All such requests shall be acknowledged.

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4.1.3 Senior Administration, in an annual Pre-Policy Planning Session, review all requests for policy initiations, review, or revision as well as all existing policies designated for review in the coming years. This is the 1st Priority Setting.

4.1.4 The policy issues, once ranked, are presented to the appropriate Board Committee for the 2nd Priority Setting. The Committee aligns the newly-prioritized policy issues with the existing priorities.

4.1.5 After the 2nd Priority Setting has taken place, the administration aligns the new policy priorities with the Long-Range Plan.

4.1.6 The Board approves the Plan to Develop Policy in specific area(s) as part of the Long-Range Plan.

4.1.7 Should the need arise to develop, review or revise a policy during the first year of the Long-Range Plan then the Board, by resolution, may alter the previously set priorities and direct Administration to follow Phases 4.2 to 4.4 for the policy area identified.

4.2 Phase Two - Development of Draft Policy

Policy Sample #11

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN DECISION MAKING

The Board endorses the concept that community participation in the affairs of schools is essential if the school district and the community are to maintain confidence and respect and work together to improve the quality of education of all students.

It also believes that effective citizen participation cannot be obtained if citizens may participate in decision making only at the district level. To respond fully to the needs and concerns of community groups, individual schools must work closely with their own school communities.

It is the Board's belief that the individual school should be a basic unit around which community participation in decision-making should be encouraged. Advisory committees for individual schools may be established, either on an ongoing basis or for a specific purpose; the Board shall set guidelines for the type of counsel such committees are asked to give the administration and the Board.

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Policy Sample #12

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN DECISION MAKING

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Policy Sample #13

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN DECISION MAKING

The Board believes that open communication between itself and the community it serves and represents shall enable the community to have a voice in the decision making process. All reasonable efforts shall be made to hear the community and be responsive through Board actions.

All citizens of the division have the following access to the Board:

1) written suggestions or proposals;
2) responses to surveys and referendums;
3) service on citizens' advisory committees; and
4) representation at Board meetings, with prior consent.

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Policy Sample #14

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES - PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The Board, in recognition of the public's rights and responsibilities in education, encourages public involvement and participation in its decision making process and in constructive feedback relative to these decisions.

In keeping with this aim, the Board shall establish appropriate mechanisms to enable achievement of the following objectives.

OBJECTIVES:

1. The Board shall encourage public attendance at regular Board Meetings.
2. The Board shall schedule agenda time during each regular meeting to encourage public input and to respond to citizens' concerns.
3. The Board's Minutes shall be available for public scrutiny upon request at its administrative offices. This does not apply to sections of the Minutes pertaining to any confidential information.
4. The Board shall encourage representatives of the media to be present at each regular meeting for the purpose of disseminating information to all sectors of the community.
5. The Board shall encourage schools to maintain a policy of openness with and welcome to its community members.
6. The Board shall encourage all staff to be generous in offering information about authorized programs and special events to the media.
7. The Board shall promote the concept that parents have the right and responsibility to communicate with the school on issues affecting their children's education.

8. The Board shall invite comments on proposed policy during the course of the policy development and prior to adoption.
9. The Board shall make its policies available to the public at the Board Office, for examination and review.
10. The Board shall encourage and support home and school associations and parental participation and involvement in school activities.

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Policy Sample #15

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1.3 THE COMMUNITY AND OUR SCHOOL DISTRICT

The Board has the dual responsibility for implementing statutory requirements pertaining to public education and responding to the community's expectations and values as they pertain to the education of children.

Trustees, as elected representatives, are provided with authority under the School Act to exercise their best judgement in determining policies, making decisions and approving procedures for carrying out the responsibility. The Board confirms its intent to fulfil this mandate and its responsibilities to determine and assess the attitudes, opinion and values of the community.

The Board therefore reaffirms its intent to:
Have effective communication systems in place that inform staff and community about the efforts and progress of the school system as well as obtain feedback and progress of the school system as well as obtain feedback and input from the various stakeholders on relevant issues.

Promote and/or have established, supportive environments in schools that encourage parental, student and community involvement.

Establish policies and make decisions on the basis of the Mission Statement and Goals, especially as they pertain to the Year 2000 initiatives and the focus on the individual learner.

Act as a true representative body for citizens of the District in matters involving public education and ensure that the rights of parents, students and staff as defined by contracts and law, are observed and defended.

Policy Sample #16

STATEMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

Childhood is both a beginning and an end in itself. As a beginning, it must be tempered by knowledge, skills and attitudes that will lead toward productive and rewarding adulthood. As an end in itself, it deserves unstinting respect of its unique spontaneity, needs and frailties. The quality we now impart to childhood is probably a close measure of the quality of our present and future welfare, as an ever expanding community of beings on an ever contracting planet. At the same time, the wellbeing of no community can be quite as precious as the purpose it ultimately serves: the well being of each individual member. While no single institutions can guarantee a bright and fruitful childhood for every child, we believe it morally incumbent upon our schools, in cooperation with parents to do everything within their legitimate means and power to guide each student toward constructive self-fulfilment and responsible citizenship, with due respect for his individual way of getting there.

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In what ways might involvement be further encouraged in your school division?

A vision without a task is but a dream. A task without a dream is drudgery, but a vision with a task is the hope of the world.

Church inscription, Sussex, England, 1730

Policy Development: Blueprints For Action

Characteristics of an Effective Parent Involvement Policy

Effective parent involvement policies tend to:

- communicate a clear vision that is mutually developed through a process of collaboration and the cooperation of all stakeholders
- establish a framework that leaves room for individual schools to move in directions that suit their unique communities. For example, involvement in an elementary school may have different qualities than in secondary school
- contain clear expectations for all members of the learning community
- provide avenues for various groups such as parent advisory committees, home and school associations, and local boards to work together harmoniously in achieving the vision
- indicate supports in place that provide an opportunity for teachers and parents to spend time together sharing perspectives and learning new skills. If, for example, parents are to be more involved in classrooms ,then teachers will need skills to work with volunteers and be prepared to work effectively with them
- maintain a balance between giving permission for encouraging involvement, and providing protection for students. Schools must continue to provide a safe environment for children.

Creating effective policy through a dynamic process is the key to successfully extending the learning community.

It is important to include parents and other members of the community when developing a policy on parent involvement. Before policy development begins, listen carefully to any concerns or ideas expressed by parents about parent involvement in the school or the community. Explain to the students, teachers, and parents that such a policy will contribute to the quality of education. Explain the process that will be used to develop the policy, and provide examples of the kinds of ideas that the policy is directed toward.

The people involved in policy-making feel strongly about it, develop a sense of ownership and benefit from the learning experience. The involvement process is almost more important than the product.

Involve as many different groups and individuals as you can. Use the development process as a springboard for educational activities such as workshops or seminars or meetings about parent involvement. Provide information to the public about the need for such a policy and how the policy will benefit the school and the community. The work you do in contacting others and letting them know about this policy will go a long way to putting the policy into action.

Typical steps in the policy planning process are:

1. Identify the need and develop a rationale with policy.
2. Consult with other boards of education which have developed similar policies. Their experiences may be informative. Samples of policies are included in Appendix D.
3. Talk to parents and community members, teachers, and students--the groups that will be involved.
4. Develop strategies for involving these groups in policy development.
5. Identify strategies to keep the board informed of progress.

6. Implement the plan for policy development.

7. Periodically assess the plan and make adjustments to the process as required.

8. Finalize policy.

9. Use the steps as a springboard for ongoing education about parent involvement.

A policy development guide sheet is provided in Appendix B.

When creating policy these are some important questions for your community to consider:

- What do parents, families, and community members want in your community?
- What is meaningful parent and community involvement?
- Are roles and responsibilities clearly understood?
- Does the school system have the resources to support parent and community involvement?
- Do the school and staff invite or frustrate involvement?
- Do you really want parent and community involvement?
- What is working well for you now?

Through the policy development process the written product now includes:

A *Statement of Philosophy* that provides the rationale, background, and focus for the policy.

The *Policy Statement* that clearly states the board's commitment and expectations.

The policy may include a *Definition of Terms* to ensure that all stakeholders are viewing the same picture. This is an integral part of communicating the vision.

The policy might also include suggestions and examples to assist others in taking action based on the policy.

Putting the Policy to Work

A policy is only as good as the number of individuals that act on it.

Consider building in checkpoints and assessment strategies for this policy. How will you know it is achieving the desired results? it is working effectively? and when it is time to revisit the process and develop a new policy that reflects growth and new stakeholders? The strength of policy comes in the process of development and growth.

What communication channels can be used to inform parents, administrators, teachers, and community members about this policy?

Policy Development Planning Sheet

Step 1 - Analyze

- Survey community attitudes and interests.
- Learn as much as you can about key people, procedures, problems, programs, and policies.
- Determine how parents and the community are currently being involved in your school.
- Identify new ways parents and the community can be involved.

Currently parents are involved through:	Other ways parents could be involved:
◆	◆
◆	◆
◆	◆
◆	◆

Step 2 - Plan

- Develop a comprehensive parent involvement policy.
- Prepare a parent involvement plan, outlining goals, objectives, and strategies.
- Determine resources needed to supplement the existing channels for parent involvement.
- Get community members involved in the planning.
- Set priorities.

Policy Development **(see page)**

Plan ---->

GOALS	OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIES

Priorities
- ◆
- ◆
- ◆

Resources Required

Time ◆

Money ◆

People ◆

Community Contracts _____ _____

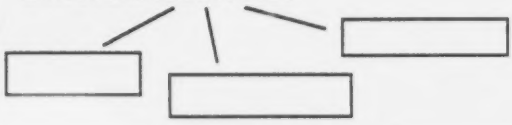
_____ _____

_____ _____

Step 3 - Implementation

- Target problems to different audiences, making sure you tailor them to meet different needs.
- Get school staff members involved. Make them aware that parent involvement is a school priority.
- Set timelines and meet them. Make everyone aware of your deadline and goals so as to work within the parameters you've set.
- Find ways to highlight parent involvement in newsletters, new articles, recognition programs, and other communications avenues.

Different Audiences



Staff Preparation

- ❑ **Inservice**
- ❑ **Involvement in Planning**
- ❑

Today — **One Year Later**

Today — **Five Years Later**

Communication Ideas to Highlight Parent and Community Involvement

- ❑ **Newsletter**
- ❑ **Buttons, pins, mugs, etc**
- ❑ **Photos in school**
- ❑ **Pamphlets & brochures**
- ❑ **Special days**
- ❑ **Recognition Notes & calls**
- ❑ **Media releases** ○ **Radio** ○ **TV** ○ **Daily & weekly newspapers**

Step 4 - Evaluation

- Listen to how are people are reacting to your communication efforts.
- Survey people about their opinions and reactions to what you have been doing.
- Reflect on the feedback you receive. What does it tell you about the effectiveness of your program? How can you use this feedback to improve your program? Are you accomplishing your objectives?

Surveys indicate _____

People say _____

New ideas _____

CONCLUSION

The importance of encouraging parents, families, and communities to be involved in the education of our children cannot be underestimated. Every one benefits . . . especially our children.

Partnerships develop through involvement, sharing, and mutual respect. Encouraging and welcoming the active support of parents in education extends into the wider communities for communities are made up of families.

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APPENDIX A

Saskatchewan Policy Examples

Wood River School Division Parental Involvement Plan

April 13, 1994

Mr. Ed Gasper, Chairperson
Board of Education
Wood River School Division #70
Box 280
Lafleche, Saskatchewan
SOH 2KO

Dear Mr. Gasper,

At a recent meeting of the Parental Involvement Committee, a motion was passed to submit our *Parental Involvement Committee Report and Policy Recommendation* to you. Those documents are attached to this letter. The Committee spent a good deal of time and energy developing the report and policy recommendation and appreciated the support of the Board to conduct its deliberations.

The Committee also recommended that we submit to you the following suggested communication plan.

1. The Committee leaves it wide open for the Board to seek input from whatever sources it wishes before adopting the policy, although it is confident in recommending adoption of its policy as it is now.

2. That the policy be sent to parents sometime before the Parent Information Meeting which, if the policy is passed, would be held early in the 1994-95 school year.

3. That the policy be available to be seen by local boards in June, 1994.

4. That feedback from parents about the policy be sought at the Parent Information Meeting.

5. That formal and informal feedback be sought from parents, teachers, principals, students, and other sources throughout the 1994/95 school year.

6. That the Parental Involvement Committee meet again in April of 1995 to review the feedback and to review the implementation of the policy.

On behalf of the Committee, thank you again for your support and encouragement. We feel the Committee has performed a valuable function for the division, and we thank the Board for sponsoring such worthwhile endeavors.

Yours sincerely,

John S. Robertson

John Robertson, Chairperson
Parental Involvement Committee

Attach.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT COMMITTEE REPORT
and
POLICY RECOMMENDATION

Wood River Parental Involvement Committee
April, 1994

This report is divided into three sections: Background, Committee Activities, and Policy Recommendations.

BACKGROUND

In August of 1993, the Wood River Board of Education reviewed its goals and objectives for the 1993/94 school year. One of its top priorities was to look at its goal concerning public information and relations. One of the action plans which the Board put into place to help meet this goal was the formation of a Parental Involvement Committee.

The Board decided that it wanted this committee to be representative as much as possible of all the towns in the Wood River School Division. It wanted a cross section of parents who were local board members, and those who weren't on local boards, to be on the committee. It wanted students, teachers, and a representative from the Principals' Group on the committee. A Board of Education member was appointed to the committee, and it was decided to facilitate the group through a secretariat of Division Office personnel.

The Board of Education felt strongly that parental involvement was an important part of the education program. In its current policies it had clearly indicated that it wishes the public and parents to be informed and consulted about educational decisions.

The Board decided to generate a list of possible committee members and then have its office staff contact those people to see if they would be willing to serve on the committee. A possible list of parents was prepared, the Teachers' Association was asked to nominate two members, and the Principals' Group was asked to nominate one member. It was decided that the Director and Supervisor of Curriculum & Instruction should be on the committee, but due to the health of the Supervisor of Curriculum & Instruction, through the committee process, the Secretary-Treasurer was added to the committee. Mrs. Gail Gross was named as the Board's representative on the committee.

The list of names generated was discussed at the Board meeting on two occasions and then people were approached to be on the committee.

The committee consists of:

Parents

Lynn Howe, Glentworth
Janet Viker, Mankota
Donna Costley, Bateman
Ray Packet, Lafleche
Jerry Ruehs, Aneroid
John Robertson, Kincaid

Students

Marcia Boisvert, Glentworth
Della Selensky, Mankota

Teachers' Association

Jeff Sopczak, Lafleche
Todd Moroz, McCord

Principal

Wilmer Silzer, Glen Bain

Division Office

Norman Dray
Sharon Compton
Ray Perzan

Board Member

Gail Gross, Glen Bain

COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

The committee held its first meeting on Wednesday, December 1, 1993, at the Wood River School Division Office. After appropriate introductions were concluded, the guidelines of the committee were reviewed, and the committee received a presentation from Division Office staff concerning the literature and theory behind parental involvement. The guidelines are attached as Appendix A.

It was clearly shown during the presentation that parental involvement in and of itself was probably not a worthwhile activity, but if the parental involvement could be linked directly to student learning and could provide ways for families to teach or support academic skills at home, there was a strong possibility that academic achievement would improve.

After the presentation the group participated in an activity during which it brainstormed parental involvement activities that schools in the Wood River School Division were already doing. A copy of that list is attached as Appendix B to this report. After this activity another small group activity was undertaken whereby the groups were asked to generate a list of ideas which schools could do to get parents involved. A copy of this list is attached as Appendix C.

At the second meeting of the committee held on January 19, 1994, it was decided to allow the committee members to bring up any concerns which they had about parental involvement in the Wood River School Division. This was done by asking them to generate what they felt were obstacles to parental involvement in our schools. Groups were created to discuss this matter.

Once the list of obstacles had been generated, the groups were given the task of choosing what they thought were the top two or three obstacles to parental involvement and were asked to brainstorm solutions as to how to overcome the obstacles. A copy of the list of obstacles and solutions is attached as Appendix D.

POLICY RECOMMENDATION

At the third meeting of the Parental Involvement Committee held on February 15, 1994, the group went through a prioritization process involving the parental involvement suggestions. The purpose of this process was to have the committee determine the areas for possible policy development. The entire meeting was used to prioritize the suggestions. The top three suggestions were:

1. That each teacher hold an information meeting at the beginning of each school year to share program and curricula information, teaching strategies, evaluation strategies, and classroom expectations. This meeting would also provide an opportunity for teachers and parents to organize possible areas for parental involvement during the school year and to determine channels of communication.

   The committee also saw the need for teachers to host periodic workshops throughout the school year to help parents become familiar with new teaching strategies and curriculum initiatives.

2. The need for continuous communication between parents and school (teachers) was highlighted. In particular, the committee saw a need for teachers to focus on providing parents with continuous information on homework, their child(ren)'s progress at school, and the role parents can play in supporting their child(ren)'s learning (i.e. What is my child learning? How is he/she doing and how can I help him/her at home?). The committee also saw the need for parents to initiate contact with teachers on a regular basis.

3. Opportunities for parental input and support regarding certain curriculum choices should be provided.

A proposed policy has been developed concerning these three topics, as well as the use of student/teacher/parent interviews. This policy is attached as Appendix E to this report.

APPENDIX A

Parental Involvement Committee

GUIDELINES

1. The mandate of the Committee shall be to recommend policies and practices to the Board of Education and its staff concerning parent involvement in schools.

2. The Board will expect the Committee to develop a more complete Terms of Reference after its formation.

3. The Committee shall have representation as follows:

   - six parents
   - two members appointed by the T.R.A.,
   - one principal appointed by the Principals' Group,
   - two students selected by the Director in consultation with the Principals' Group,
   - one or two Board of Education members,
   - the Supervisor of Curriculum & Instruction and Director of Education as ex-officio members and staff liaison.

4. Kilometerage shall be paid for the Committee members to attend meetings with the assumption that there will be shared vehicles whenever possible.

5. Due to the composition of the Committee, most meetings will be scheduled outside of school time, but there is a possibility of at least one meeting during school time.

6. The Committee shall meet a maximum of four times unless further meetings are authorized by the Board of Education.

7. The Committee shall choose its own chair.

APPENDIX B

Parental Involvement Committee

WHAT SCHOOLS ARE DOING NOW TO GET PARENTS INVOLVED

- Report cards
- Parent/teacher interviews
- Regular newsletters (mailed bi-monthly)
- Phone calls (positive)
- School-home correspondence (notebooks)
- Open houses
- Book fairs
- Parental volunteers (assistance)
- Parental demonstrations
- Transportation of students
- Field trips (chaperons, etc.)
- Donations of baking, food, etc.
- Social/instructional meetings (teas, plays, etc.)
- Parental coaching (working with a teacher supervisor)
- Hot lunch programs
- Home and school program
- Volunteer work on construction projects
- Local board representation (annual meeting)
- Rural municipality involvement in projects (i.e. grader service)
- Parent information meetings
- Dinner theatres
- Division Board representation
- Graduations/awards nights (donations of awards)
- Career fair or science fair
- Use of school for various activities: arts council, parenting videos, etc.
- Hosting events by parents
- Sending home assignments, folders, tests, for signing
- Open house/fairs - school-wide
- Classroom oriented - father's day, etc.
- Volunteers
- Newsletters
- Bringing arts ed. into the school, i.e. Kincaid Arts Council
- Playground upkeep
- Parent/teacher interviews
- Parent committees (1 hot meal/month)
- Newsletter (general mailing) (Monthly and/or weekly)
- Driving and coaching for sports and field trips

- Helping hands (Parents to help)
- Christmas planning - making costumes, building props, meals for parents
- Use of the facilities - parent volleyball, Arts Council
- Parent Open House - parents visit school; kids brag about their work
- Parent Information Meeting - teachers explain the programs
- Student work folders (signed)
- Homework steps (detention)
- Report cards
- Supervision of school activities (dances, grads, etc.)
- Parent/teacher interviews
- Newsletters
- Food sale - parents help younger students
- Parent information evening
- Open house
- Monthly lunch (parents make meal)
- Parents as teachers (crafts)
- Drivers for sports, career days
- Parents host school trips
- Parents work with own child in school in order to continue directly at home
- Celebrations (grad, year-end)
- Sports day
- Chaperon

APPENDIX C

Parental Involvement Committee

WHAT SCHOOLS COULD DO FOR PARENTS TO GET INVOLVED

1. Parent workshops, i.e. helping with homework, going to interviews.
2. Parental input on curriculum choices.
3. More use of parents as specialists, i.e. many farm dads have developed unique shops tools, etc., reinforcing the fact that there is more than school learning.
4. Homework involvement - knowing what is being accomplished; effectiveness of what is being done.
5. More special days like awards days and Christmas concerts.
6. Parents help kids decorate for special occasions such as Christmas, grad, etc.
7. More meetings with parents (include students and have education to show how to do).
8. Start up meetings at beginning of year to set goals, dates, etc.
9. Parents that are involved with teachers to reach the parents that are not involved.
10. Each teacher having a classroom learning session where they invite all parents in to explain what that particular class is doing and expect to accomplish.
11. Find a way to have more people attend annual meetings.
12. Meet with a teacher more frequently than parent/teacher interviews to discuss how a student could benefit by doing things differently at home.
13. Learn more about the type of learning in the classroom - parent night (information). Learn about discipline and teaching techniques and marking.
14. Involve the community (service clubs) more in the school.
15. Sharing of family/personal interests, i.e. if an event at home could be shared at school.

16. Homework activities that are done together (possibly the student teaching the parents new concepts learned at school).

17. Set up a schedule of specific time slots throughout the year where the parents may come into the classroom.

18. Parents calling teachers with positive comments about their kids.

19. Parents volunteering to make meals, etc., for students.

20. This Parental Involvement Committee creating a link between all those involved in the educational process.

21. Open discussion on new curricula and creating an atmosphere for free discussion of opinions.

22. Open classrooms and equipment, i.e. computer rooms, gyms, and speakers, to parents and community. (Allow parents to experience the same activities of the students.)

23. Planned program for parents to sign up and volunteer (be sure it involves everyone).

24. Detailed account of how the school functions financially (understanding where the money goes). Information meetings.

25. Family element of getting together as a family function (at the school, i.e. sports, games night).

26. Homework - joint planning - assignments for parents and students, i.e. special education, both and all parties know what's going on.

27. Special weekly class letters to let parents know what is being done in each room.

APPENDIX D

Parental Involvement Committee

OBSTACLES AND SOLUTIONS

Obstacle #1

Trusting parents to keep confidentiality of the school.

- Complete a form of expectations so confidentiality can be kept.
- Make sure confidential materials/comments are not shared.
- Parents should not be put into a situation where they have to judge students.

Obstacle #2

Parents aren't familiar with information in courses so unable to help with homework.

- Parent/teacher workshop on the material in the program.
- Open dialogue when problems arise.

Obstacle #3

Communication between school and parents (parents unaware vs. teachers not knowing how to tell parents).

- Weekly newsletter on classroom activities.
- Daily or whenever homework is given (homework sheet).
- Monthly activity calendar (plans for the month).
- Parents sign the homework slip and return to the school.
- Major exams or assignments sent home and signed.
- Assurances that there will not be problems with their child if concerns arise.

Obstacle #4

Give all parents an equal opportunity to be involved in activities at the school.

- Driving schedules for sports.
- Schedules for various activities (rink skate tying, etc.)
- Beginning school year sign-up sheet for parents so interests and availability are indicated.
- Personal contact with certain parents to make them more welcome to be involved.

- Have community people express their abilities and use these people as resource persons.

Obstacle #5

School not having a welcoming atmosphere or parents perceiving that the atmosphere is not welcoming.

(a) Parents: Could be willing to invest time in coming into school to observe and discuss.

(b) School: Set a policy so that parents know when it is appropriate to come into the school (negotiate or discuss at a parent meeting). Do not just send a note home about parents coming in; as much face-to-face discussion as possible. Having more informal get-togethers to break down barriers.

Obstacle #6

Parents feel a fear of repercussion (against child) for speaking out against something that has happened in school.

(a) Parents: Need to go through proper channels - perhaps need to be educated as to "ladder", i.e. teacher > principal > director > board.

(b) School: Can act on any situation that does occur. Can tell parents this could be a concern and if it occurs please notify through the proper channels. Teacher documents and discusses with parents (ongoing).

Obstacle #7

Same parents are always involved and become burned out.

(a) School: Schedule (i.e. through Home and School); recognition of help (awards, letters); parental involvement at beginning to help set agenda (ownership).

Obstacle #8

Territory - sense of not belonging or feeling welcome (feeder schools).

- open house
- student/parent activities
- welcoming letter
- sending newsletters sooner to feeder school parents
- more activities to make parents aware

- activities through the school years
- parent/teacher/student committee
- parents inviting teachers for a visit
- return to feeder schools for different things
- community school/feeder school - where do I put my energy?

Obstacle #9

Student attitudes

- the more it happens, the more normal it will become
- parent/teacher/student committee
- hot meal
- parents working in canteen
- parents bringing their knowledge to the school
- gatherings where parents come to school and talk about themselves
- ask parents how they want to get involved (be specific)

Obstacle #10

Time (would like to get involved but don't have time).

- variety of activities
- options of involvement that parents can choose from
- asking parents what their view is on getting involved
- not having format/policies which encourage involvement and support it

Obstacle #11

Lack of knowledge about what's going on at school; expectations for homework.

- move away from newsletters
- students run a radio station
- positive phone calls home

Timid

- parents reluctant to come forward; may not realize involvement is wanted; intimidated
- concern for how their child might be treated

Obstacle #12

Communications

- Communications between parents and kids; kids don't tell parents enough ... *"What happened at school today - Nothing."*
- Communications of feeder schools; a sense of not "owning" part of that other school.
- Confidentiality concerns.
- Student attitudes - willingness to have parents involved.

Communication and understanding: All people may not agree, but it is important that all understand *why* you are doing it, not agree to *how*.

Obstacle #13

Parents' time to help.

- give parents a choice of when they could help
- give choice of different activities (different ways of being involved)
- school finding ways to help parents get involved with kids at home

Obstacle #14

Negative attitudes.

- don't change action because of negative attitude
- let them know there is a goal behind what you're doing
- to change a negative attitude, you have to get them involved

Obstacle #15

Teachers pressured (by parents they can't get along with).

- teachers have to understand that parents need to be involved and have the right to be involved
- parents have to learn the new way to learn.

APPENDIX E

Parental Involvement Committee

PROPOSED POLICY: PARENTS

Wood River School Division #70 No.: 902

Policy Title: SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Policy Topic: PARENTS

The Board of Education strongly supports the connection between parental involvement and student learning. It believes that if parental involvement is connected to student learning, there will be a resultant growth in student achievement. With that philosophy in mind, the Board states the following.

1. Each teacher shall hold an informational meeting for the parents of the students he/she is teaching before October 15 of any school year. For schools on the semester system there is an option of holding one meeting in the fall to address both semesters or one in the fall before October 1 to address the first semester and another meeting before March 1 to deal with the second semester. (Students may be invited to this meeting.)

   Topics to be addressed at this meeting shall include but not be restricted to the following:

   (a) Classroom expectations.

   (b) Curriculum to be covered during the course of the year.

   (c) Instructional and evaluation strategies to be used and an explanation of those strategies.

   (d) A discussion of how parents can support the instructional and extracurricular programs in the school.

2. The Board believes that continuous communication with parents, related to curriculum and instruction and how parents can help their children in school, is important during the course of the school year.

The following framework supports such communication.

(a) Teachers shall, during the course of the year, keep parents informed of the topics and themes being taught in the classroom and how parents can help with those topics or themes at home.

(b) Teachers should, from time to time, host workshops during the school year to help parents become familiar with new teaching strategies and curriculum initiatives. (These workshops may involve students.)

(c) Teachers shall provide the opportunity for parents to have contact with them more frequently than during formal parent/teacher(/student) interviews to discuss such topics as how a student could benefit by cooperation between home and school.

(d) Teachers should organize several homework activities that involve parent and student together. Class newsletters or teacher newsletters to parents are strongly encouraged.

(e) Parents are encouraged to contact their child(ren)'s teacher(s) throughout the school year.

3. Parental input on curriculum choices is something which the Board believes can be helpful, if it takes the form of advice, and if it is offered in an atmosphere of support and concern. (Student input may also be sought.)

   With this in mind the following is recommended.

   (a) During the parent meeting at the beginning of the school year or some other appropriate occasion, parental input should be sought on theme and course offerings which may be optional. Teachers are asked to present parents with options as frequently as possible.

4. The Board strongly recommends the use of parent/student/teacher interviews. It is believed that the connection of all three parties, at least for a portion of the interview, can be a positive force.

April, 1994

Regina Public School Board

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

COMMITTEE

INTERIM REPORT

SEPTEMBER 8, 1993

88

BACKGROUND

The following motion was passed by the Regina Board of Education on January 19, 1993:

> *That parent/community councils be organized at all schools to facilitate communication between schools and communities served, and that:*
> *a) An in-service program be developed and provided to all parent/community councils for the purpose of improving their effectiveness in assisting schools to meet the needs of pupils;*
> *b) A committee be established with representation from parent organizations, Board, various segments of society, and staff to organize a parents' convention in Spring 1994, together with a program relative to the role of parent/community councils in our public education system.*

The Parent Involvement Committee was formed in the spring of 1993 and first met on April 26, 1993 (Appendix A).

A major focus of the committee has been the organization of the Parent Convention held March 18 and 19, 1994.

FORMAT

Planning of the Parent Convention took into account the needs of parents as expressed during the Parent Involvement evening of October 4, 1993. The topics selected were a combination of general sessions on parent involvement and specific sessions dealing with "parenting" issues.

THE PARENT CONVENTION

A total of 191 registrations were received. These were made up of parent representatives and principals, vice-principals or teacher representatives from schools. All Regina public schools were represented. In addition, 15 people attended as guests of the committee (Appendix B).

BUDGET

The committee's goal was to keep the expenses for the convention to a minimum. A $10.00 registration fee was charged to registrants to help defray the costs (Appendix C). The total cost of the convention was $3,488.49. The revenue of $1,910.00 resulted in a total cost to the Board of $1,578.49

EVALUATION

Evaluation forms were included in all registration packages and were solicited from participants. Those in attendance were pleased with the concept of the Parent Convention with 102/104 respondents indicating they would attend another such event. Appendix D provides a summary of general comments.

FUTURE PLANS

Part of the evaluation form included a section where respondents would suggest other topics of interest for future gatherings. These topics have been passed on to the Professional Development Committee which will plan sessions later this spring. The mailing list generated by the Parent Convention will be used to invite parents to these sessions.

The committee will meet following Easter Break to evaluate the Parent Convention. At this time discussions will take place about future Parent Conventions or other opportunities to promote parent involvement in Regina Public Schools.

Background

The following motion was passed by the Regina Board of Education on January 19, 1993:

"That parent/community councils be organized in all schools to facilitate communication between schools and communities served, and that:

a) An in-service program be developed and provided to all parent/community councils for the purpose of improving their effectiveness in assisting schools to meet the needs of pupils;

b) A committee be established with representation from parent organizations, Board, various segments of society and staff to organize a parents' convention in Spring 1994, together with a program relative to the role of parent/community councils in our public education system.

A literature search was conducted and inquiries to other school jurisdictions regarding parent/community involvement were made in March, 1993.

The committee was struck and met for the first time on April 26, 1993.

Committee Membership

Bob Brown, Assistant Superintendent, Chair
Margaret Fern, Chairperson, Regina Board of Education
Lynne Johnson, Trustee, Regina Board of Education
Brian Malley, Assistant Superintendent
Rod Gawley, Work Experience Coordinator
Bill Wood, Principal, Judge Bryant Elementary School
Audrey Roadhouse, Principal, Sheldon-Williams Collegiate
Colleen Meyer, Regina Public School Teachers' Association
Leslie Anderson, Saskatchewan School Trustees' Association
Laurie Andersen, W. H. Ford School Parents' Association
Denise Gress, Massey School Parents' Association
Janice Colborne, Massey School Parents' Association
Roberta Belliveau, Ruth Pawson School Parents' Association
Jill McKenzie, Balfour Collegiate Parents' Association
Barb Saylor, Martin Collegiate Parents

Committee Work to Date

The committee met four times between April and June, 1993. Discussions centred around several topics including:

- a definition of parent involvement
- current status of parent involvement in Regina Public Schools
- the key ingredients of a successful parent association
- plans for the 93/94 school year
- what was learned from information sent from other school jurisdictions.

In addition, five committee members attended a one day symposium in Saskatoon on parent involvement sponsored by the Saskatchewan Federation of Home and School Associations, the Saskatchewan Educational Leadership Unit, and the Saskatchewan School Trustees' Association.

Plans from the 1993/94 School Year

A. PARENT/PRINCIPAL WORKSHOP - OCTOBER 4, 1993

This evening workshop will be attended by school teams consisting of the principal and two parent representatives from the school community. The format of the evening is:

Introductory Remarks/Welcome
- Margaret Fern, Chairperson
- Larry Huber, Director

Keynote Address
- "Parent Involvement: Past, Present, Future"
- Dr. Pat Renihan, University of Saskatchewan

Small Group Meetings
- School teams meet to discuss parent involvement with other school community representatives

Topics for Discussion
- Present situation with parent involvement in our school
- Ideas to improve/increase parent involvement
- Topics regarding parent involvement which would be of benefit in the future

Concluding Remarks/Closure
- Dr. Pat Renihan

It is hoped that this workshop will allow the sharing of ideas between principals and parents and between school communities.

B. PARENT CONVENTION - SPRING 1994

The purpose of this convention is to provide a variety of topics/speakers dealing with parent involvement for parents and school administrators. Plans for this convention are at the preliminary stage.

SCHOOL TIMES

Spring 1994 REGINA PUBLIC SCHOOLS We bring learning to life!

Parents – an important part of education

Parents—a child's first and most permanent teachers—are an important part of education in Regina Public Schools. Working with their child's teachers and the school, parents help to bring learning to life in our schools.

Parents are involved as volunteers, as drivers or chaperones for special events, as members of the parent council or other school-community committees. The good news is they want to be more involved.

In response to requests for information about the school system and ideas on parent involvement, Regina Public Schools held its first-ever **Parent Convention** March 18 and 19.

The Convention was the first major event organized by our Parent Involvement Committee - a committee of parents, teachers and administrators established following a board motion in January 1993.

On Friday evening, keynote speakers Drs. Fred and Patrick Renihan used humor and facts to outline the evolution of parent involvement in education.

"Traditionally teachers have operated autonomously. It is not unusual for some to experience growing pains as schools move toward more collaborative involvement of parents. Parents who want to be involved often have to get beyond their memories of school and be prepared to learn about how schools operate today," the Renihans told the 250 participants.

"The first step to successful parent involvement at any level is communication," the Renihans said. "This convention is an indication of the value placed on parent involvement in Regina Public Schools. It offers an opportunity for parents, teachers and administrators to begin sharing ideas."

Working within small groups, the participants were asked to identify facilitators and barriers to parent involvement.

Both parents and teachers identified time and opportunity as the number one barrier to involvement. Primary facilitators to parent involvement were identified as:

- frequent communications,
- a warm and welcoming environment,
- caring teachers,
- supportive leadership,
- recognition of contributions, and
- opportunities for parents to learn about the system.

On Saturday, parents attended concurrent sessions on a variety of topics (see pages 2 and 3).

"We appreciate the many different ways in which parents contribute to the education of their children and to school life," said Larry Huber, Director of Education. "Working together, we can continue to provide top quality educational experiences for students in Regina Public Schools.

Rave reviews...

"The convention was a tremendous idea. This is the year of the family and I want to take more time to get involved at school."

"There were so many excellent sessions, it was difficult to choose."

"We should have such a convention more often. The more parents that get involved in education, the better."

"I was worried about not having an opportunity for feedback, but that wasn't the case."

"Maybe next time it could be a family convention with sessions for the children and maybe some sessions by the children so parents and teachers could hear their perspective."

"Excellent seminar! I learned a lot about how we can be more involved and assist the education system with what is most important - the quality education provided to our children."

"It is nice to see that parents aren't considered a nuisance to the school. A great bouquet to the School Board for their splendid effort and achievement. Hopefully this is just the beginning."

Saskatchewan's Community Schools

The community schools program is designed to strengthen the bonds between schools and their communities. The program's major objective is to involve parents and community members in the education system for the mutual benefit of the school and the community. Currently there are eighteen community schools in Saskatchewan, and these schools encourage the community use of facilities, community involvement in the regular school and classroom programs, community based adult education programs, additional programs for children and youth, community development, coordination of social services and representative community school councils.

In the Minister's response to the High School Review Advisory Committee's Final Report - Policy Directions for Secondary Education in Saskatchewan, (Saskatchewan Education Training and Employment 1994) indicates that the committee's recommendations regarding roles and responsibilities included recommendations centred on a broad adoption of the community school model. The department will undertake a review of the community schools program and other programs in the department serving at risk children to develop a new conceptual framework and provide direction for a new generation of community schools.

A key objective of the review will be to identify ways to promote the adoption of the principles and practices of community schools by all schools. The potential outcomes include greater student retention, increased attendance and achievement, enhanced community involvement in education, improved self-worth and pride in school among schools, and decreased prejudice and racism.

Scott Collegiate in Regina and Princess Alexandra School in Saskatoon are two current examples of community schools in the province.

APPENDIX B

Taking Action at the School Level

Encouraging Parent Involvement

Successful parental involvement at the school level is encouraged when a welcoming climate is developed in schools, there is a sense of mutual respect, and parents share a common cause and a meaningful reason for being involved.

Most parents said that they could do more if teachers would tell them what to do.

1 A Welcoming Climate can be developed when we:

- Create a comfortable environment
- Recognize scepticism and fear around schools
- Provide a place for parents to have a "cup of tea"
- Reserve a school board spot
- Build and staff schools with thoughtful, caring administrators who are willing to make changes and teachers who take part and create a welcoming climate in every classroom
- Foster a positive attitude of openness, that allows people to change and develop positive attitudes toward schools
- Incorporate Community schools concepts
- Encourage teachers to go to reserves to meet and visit with families
- Open the school to the community

- Create a culturally conducive school
- Foster and develop success, for success breeds success
- Empower parents--express an earnest, sincere desire to include parents
- Hold interviews at band offices, provide transportation
- Serve food
- Train staff to welcome parent volunteers
- Open the library after hours to the community
- Invite parents to call teachers by their first name
- Use an integrated services approach to maximize use of the school facility
- Contact parents on a regular basis
- Have locally elected boards
- View "religions" as "value systems"

2 A Sense of Mutual Respect is Essential

Respect can be demonstrated when we:

- View parents as partners
- Include Aboriginal people at various levels - administrators, teachers, aides
- Nurture culturally aware institutions
- Develop committed leadership that encourages public institutions to be equitable for all students
- Examine all decision-making structures--Avoid separating people by language and culture
- Increase flexibility in rules and legal issues, etc.
- Communicate respect fully and frequently

- See the need for awareness and understanding of barriers and the challenges of change and crossing cultures
- Attend or host special cultural activities
- "Know ourselves and who our children are"
- Believe that cross-cultural education is for EVERYONE
- Although 'festival' approach may foster racism, cultural mosaics help to increase respect for self and others

3 Parents Must Share a Common Cause And Reason For Involvement

This can be developed through:

- Curriculum and extra-curricular activities that reflect interests of parents. "Cultural power"
- Parent volunteers
- Cooperative ventures
- Contacting parents about their children and making decisions about them
- Forums that encourage meaningful input
- Everyone working together
- Increased parent awareness to become involved
- A belief that what we do in schools is meaningful
- Video-taped parent-student soccer games
- Elder programs
- Parent advisory groups setting directions
- Community leaders participating and involving others--such as grandparents. A respectful approach and invitation to respected elders is so important.

"Think US and WE rather than THEM"

Forum participant, 1993

- Curriculum that is relevant to students and parents
- Educators being encouraged and valued as learners
- Implement these ideas

Key Considerations for Involving Parents in School

1. Keep the school open, friendly, and helpful.
2. Maintain frequent and clear two-way communication with parents.
3. Encourage parents to comment on school policies and, when appropriate, share in decision-making.
4. Forge partnerships with all families connected with the school.
5. Promote parent and community volunteer participation.
6. Develop a plan at the school level.
7. Provide inservice for staff about working with parents.

Why People Volunteer

- To give of themselves
- To help their children
- To learn and grow
- To exercise leadership
- To share in decision-making
- To keep in touch with what is happening in school
- To have fun

Some Ideas

1. Start small but START.
2. Prepare staff members and parents. Share ideas and information.
3. Share the vision.
4. Establish short exercises that parents can do at home with their children.
5. Hold workshops for parents and teachers.
6. Encourage parents to involve or help other parents.
7. Nurture a climate of openness and sharing.

Parent Involvement Policy Development Worksheet

1. Is there a need for parent involvement in your school/school division?

2. Who are the individuals and groups in your community that would have an interest in parent involvement?

3. How would you get input from the various individuals and groups in your community?

4. What individual or group would write the drafts of your policy?

5. How would you involve the Board of Education?

6. How would you keep them informed of feedback received from individuals and groups?

7. How would you use the process of developing a parent involvement policy to educate students, teachers, parents and community members as well as to get their input concerning the policy?

8. What aspects of your plan might need to be adapted as you proceed with the development of the parent involvement policy?

9. What is the first thing you would do after the final version of the parent involvement policy was formally adopted by the Board?

Essential Tips for Learning at School

1. Parent visitation days, with invitations designed and written by the children, provide a way to acquaint parents with the school's program and services.
2. Assisting teachers with special classroom activities and projects, such as bookmaking, science experiments, cooking, field trips, etc.
3. Using parents' special talents and expertise to enrich the curriculum.
4. Reading to children and listening to children read.
5. Tutoring children who need extra help.
6. Assisting with band, chorus, drama, and other programs in the arts.
7. Helping supervise and direct before- and after-school programs for children.
8. Assisting with the organization and supervision of grade-level or schoolwide projects, such as a read-a-thon, book fair, meet-the-author program, book-swap, reading carnival, and ice cream social/awards night.

Essential Tips for Learning at Home

1. Talk with your child about daily events and take time to listen to what your child wants to tell you. Conversation around the dinner table about everyday and world events promotes learning.
2. Read aloud to your child often--every day if possible--and encourage your child to read to you. The best way to help children become better readers is to begin to read to them when they are infants. The more children read, both in school and outside, the more they will improve their reading abilities. And take your child to the library to get his or her own library card.
3. Encourage children to draw and scribble stories at home. This will help them learn to write with greater confidence in school.
4. Take your child to new and different places, such as museums, historical sites, and nature centers. Talk about what you have seen.
5. Supervise television viewing. Choose good programs and set some time limits--and talk with your children about the programs they do watch.
6. Be generous in showing affection and express interest in your child's everyday activities and accomplishments.
7. Establish a regular time and place for doing homework, encourage your child's efforts, and offer praise when assignments are completed.
8. Encourage good health practices by making sure your child has three nutritious meals a day, gets plenty of exercise and sleep, and has regular medical and dental check-ups.
9. Instill self-confidence by encouraging your child to believe in his or her self-worth and abilities.
10. Monitor how your child spends his or her time outside of school. Limit video games and television viewing and encourage reading, hobbies, scouts, and other worthwhile activities that provide learning opportunities.
11. Make sure your child attends school regularly, show an interest in what is being learned at school, and communicate that education is important. Belief in the value of hard work, personal responsibility, and the importance of education all contribute to greater success in school.
12. Be a role model for your child. Children imitate what they see their parents doing. If you read, your child will want to read.

Homeworking, an excellent resource that is full of ideas, is published by The Metropolitan Toronto School Board.

From Policy to Planning at the School Level

Planning for Parent and Family Involvement (Dobber & Epstein)

1. Assess current strengths and weaknesses to determine the appropriate starting point for developing comprehensive programs.
2. Identify new and attainable goals for teachers, administrators, and parents; and identify the teams, committees, or individuals responsible for gauging progress toward those goals.
3. Evaluate programs in terms of their goals and report findings to constituent groups.
4. Support program development will continue with attention and assistance.

Encouraging Involvement at the School Level

Top 20 Tips

1. Make parent involvement a schoolwide effort. Teachers and administrators must be committed to parent involvement, and staff enthusiasm stimulates greater parent participation.
2. Provide interesting and timely information about upcoming events and activities. Reminder notices and telephone calls provide additional encouragement.
3. Maintain a warm and friendly school environment where parents feel comfortable, needed, and respected.
4. Student interest generates parent interest. Students can make personal invitations, plan activities, and serve as hosts.
5. Develop activities and projects that involve the entire family.
6. Make your outreach efforts contagious by involving as many parents, teachers, students, administrators, and community members as possible.
7. Schedule activities for the convenience of parents, not schools.

8. Communicate frequently with parents through a brief phone call or note.

9. Provide parents with many opportunities to discuss their children's interests and achievements. And acknowledge those achievements. Parents like to see their children succeed.

10. Suggest home activities that extend the natural relationship between parents and children and provide opportunities for family interaction in ways that are educationally interesting and meaningful.

11. Call frequently with brief messages of good news to convey the idea that a call from school is not just about problems. One call a day means 190 calls through the year.

12. Approach parents with a nonjudgemental attitude to discover reasons for noninvolvement. Sometimes parents just need information and encouragement.

13. Consider home visits, especially for parents who, for whatever reason, do not come to school.

14. Hold parent meetings in locations other than the school--homes, churches, or community centers for parents who may be intimidated by the school environment.

15. Enlist parents in a telephone tree to spread the word about special school activities and projects.

16. Coordinate with local community organizations and agencies that offer services to families. Schools can link families in need of social services to agencies about which they might not be aware.

17. Become involved in such neighbourhood projects as day care, health, and recreation to demonstrate to parents that the school cares about issues affecting their welfare.

18. Provide child care and transportation for special events and activities.

19. Do not give up on any parent. Be patient with parents. Some may be reluctant to get involved due to any number of reasons. Keep trying.

20. Recognize parents for their efforts: happygrams, certificates, awards, thank-you letters, end-of-year celebrations, phone calls.

Parent Involvement Program Survey

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

Children in School (s)

Name of Child	Age	School

I would like to learn more about:

_____ things I can do to help my child in school
_____ how to help in the school and classroom
_____ school policies and programs
_____ parenting
_____ parents in the community
_____ what's going on in the community for me and my family
_____ ways in which I can assist my child with homework
_____ the special people who work with my child

I could go to meetings:

_____ in the morning
_____ in the afternoon
_____ in the evening
_____ on weekends

I think the best place for parents to get together is:

_____ in a home
_____ at the school
_____ community center/library
_____ other

Return this form to your child's teacher by: _____

Adapted from Lyons, Peggy Robbins, Al & Smith, Allen. (1983). Involving Parents: A Handbook for Participation in Schools.

Parent and Community Involvement in Education

"What can we do?" is a question frequently asked. The following list is intended to encourage discussion regarding the role of parents and community in supporting the school education program. For each statement, indicate the "actual" and "desired" involvement of parents and community in your school for determining:

Actual (present)	Desired (ideal)	*low involvement 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 high involvement*
		Program and Instruction:
☐	☐	1. What is taught in the curricular program.
☐	☐	2. What activities are included in the extra-curricular program.
☐	☐	3. Volunteer, apprenticeship and mentoring programs.
☐	☐	4. Expectations for the evaluation and reporting of student progress.
☐	☐	5. Local options (language of instruction, family life/sex education, religious instruction).
☐	☐	6. The assessing of how well school programs are doing in achieving student learning.
		Resources:
☐	☐	7. Strategies for fund raising.
☐	☐	8. Resource requirements, priorities and budget allocations.
☐	☐	9. Student transportation system.
☐	☐	10. Public use of school facilities.
☐	☐	11. Allocating learning time during the school day and year.
☐	☐	12. Facility and maintenance needs.
☐	☐	13. The supervision of children.
☐	☐	14. Interagency programs to meet student and family needs.
☐	☐	15. Use of textbooks and other resources.
		Personnel:
☐	☐	16. Overall staffing needs for the school.
☐	☐	17. Selection of school administration.
☐	☐	18. Selection of professional staff.
☐	☐	19. Selection of support staff.
☐	☐	20. The performance appraisal of school administration.
☐	☐	21. The performance appraisal of professional staff.
☐	☐	22. The performance appraisal of support staff.

Parent and Community Involvement in Education

	Actual (present)	Desired (ideal)	*low involvement 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 high involvement*
			Organizational Development:
23.	☐	☐	The school mission, philosophy and goals.
24.	☐	☐	Standards for general expectations, student dress and behaviour.
25.	☐	☐	Expectations of parents and community in building a learning community.
26.	☐	☐	The assessment of the outcomes of school improvement efforts.
27.	☐	☐	The relevance and effectiveness of school policies and procedures.
28.	☐	☐	Support and counsel for the school principal.
29.	☐	☐	Public perceptions regarding the school and school system.
			Communication:
30.	☐	☐	Strategies for improving two-way communication with school staff.
31.	☐	☐	Strategies for improving two-way communication with parents and public.
32.	☐	☐	Strategies for improving two-way communication with the division board.
33.	☐	☐	Strategies for resolving disputes between parents and the school staff.
34.	☐	☐	Strategies for school public relations.
35.	☐	☐	Opportunities for information and study sessions regarding changes in education.

Three areas of potential increased parent and community involvement include:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Source: Saskatchewan School Trustees Association

School Level Policy Sample - Pilot Butte

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOLING:
Enhancing the Partnership

The relationship between Pilot Butte School and parents is a cooperative partnership that involves communication and participation. The school has established and continues to develop programs for parents. The programs include curriculum, instruction, school management, and a support system for parents.

The program that we have established has high expectations for parents and teachers. There is an obligation on the part of both parties to work towards a more successful learning environment. The school stresses the importance of parent involvement in their children's education. We want parents to be aware of the programs, curriculum, school management and support services established at Pilot Butte School.

The school has established five levels of school and parent cooperation.

1. Parents provide conditions at home that support learning; support programs and workshops.

I.

a) The school has a homework policy that is sent home for parent support.
b) The parent signs a student responsibility policy form to support assignments (attached).
c) The student evaluation policy parent document is presented to parents in the fall (hand out).
d) The school presents a middle years parent guidebook in the fall (hand out).
e) The school has a hand out given to the grade nine student parents on "Taking the Step to High School," in the spring prior to high school registration.
f) The school has provided the parents with a "global overview" of school programs through a chart that is included in the student handbook, placed in the entrances into the school and it is sent in a monthly newsletter (attached).

II. Parent programs are on an ongoing basis where we keep parents informed on new programs that affect their children. Some of them are:

a) "Where There's A Will There's An A...." workshop for effective studying and learning support program for parents.
b) Drugs workshop.
c) AIDS workshop.
d) Student Evaluation.
e) and the list goes on.

III. The school has purchased programs for parents that are available through our Resource Centre.

a) Barbara Colorossa.
b) Parenting books/tapes.

This list is available upon request.

2. The school communicates with families about programs and children's progress.

a) Parent-teacher-student conferences are held twice a school year which are scheduled conference times with parents. Students from grades 6 to 9 are in attendance at these conferences. We have over 95% of our parents attending these conferences.
b) Weekly Performance letters are sent home through the office to parents about the progress of their son/daughter. These are comments from the students' teachers which reflects possible positive or negative aspects about school performance (attached).
c) Staff phone calls home are required on a needs basis. Teachers are also asked to contact parents early in the school year so as to help establish a closer rapport.
d) Parent Conferences are called when issues arise that need to be dealt with immediately or on a personal basis.
e) A monthly newsletter is mailed to every ratepayer in the district which outlines program initiatives at the school. It also provides information concerning how parents can help their child's learning at school.
f) The school has established display frames in the community where we outline student work and activities.

3. **Parent and other volunteers assist in the classrooms, Resource Centre and other parts of the school. Parents may attend events that the school schedules. Such events are usually scheduled at times that will be most convenient to the parents.**

To encourage parent involvement the following steps are taken:

a) Parent volunteer form is sent home each fall for parents.
b) Teachers call parents individually for parent assistance for a particular time of day or event.
c) The need for parent support and participation is stressed.
d) Parents are invited to attend all events that their children are involved in. The events range from co-curricular athletic events such as badminton games, basketball games to weekend tournaments held at the school. Parents are also invited to attend scheduled academic/leadership events. Some of these activities are: oratorical program, Remembrance Day ceremonies, student convention, science fair, grade nine farewell, etc. The list of involvement is ongoing. Parents are sometimes involved as helpers, speakers, etc.
e) Family nights are held where parents are asked to come to the school to participate in special activities established for parents that can range from academic related material to a fun filled evening with their children and the rest of the school/community families. Some of the events are:
   - Family Bingo (sponsored by Home and School)
   - Halloween Dance (sponsored by Home and School)
   - Family Badminton Night
   - Family Carnival

4. **Teachers guide and assist parents so they can coordinate home learning activities with school instruction. The school offers homework support and other services to assist parents in helping their children succeed.**

a) A school year calendar is published yearly as a means of keeping parents aware of our programs and activities.
   i) Year calendar with events scheduled is published and given to parents at the beginning of the school year (attached).

ii) Student handbook provided for our grade 5 to 9 students is sent home for parents to review and work with their children.

b) Parent Orientation Evenings are scheduled for parents to attend. At those sessions the parents meet their children's teachers. These are held at the beginning of the school year. Information packages on programs, courses, evaluation policy and expectations are distributed to parents and explained. Those parents unable to attend are mailed the information.

c) Meet the Teacher Night is held prior to the Parent Orientation evening. This is the evening where students promote their parents and staff at the school in a less than formal atmosphere. Support information is available to parents as they enter the school.

d) The school offers, through the Buffalo Plains School Division and provincial agencies, a list of services available for their children or themselves. This list includes:
- Educational Psychologist
- Speech Therapist
- Youth Care Facilitator
- Government services like Social Services, Child and Youth and other related agencies.

5. **The school involves and trains parents and community in decision making as well as in school governance.**

a) A Support Community/School Committee is established where each others expectations are shared. The school emphasis is to continue to promote its expectations in regards to community events and activities.

b) Local School Board has input through the support given of the school. This is done through policy awareness and approval.

c) A Home and School Association is established in the school. It plays a major role in providing input concerning any new or established school initiatives. It provides school related services such as a child care service at noon for the students, and sponsoring education information evenings for parents.

d) Community School Usage and Involvement. The community through the local Recreation Board uses our facilities for various functions that help to build support for each others programs. This approach also helps to build comradery and awareness. This involvement has seen these users in talking and working with our students throughout the year. We at the school stress the importance of the school's availability for community use. Some activities are:

- Soccer
- Basketball
- Gymnastics
- Guides, Brownies, etc
- etc.
- Archery
- Volleyball
- Wildlife Seminar
- First Aid

Our commitment is to continue to work with parents in participation and cooperation.. We stress that we want the parents and their children to be highly successful and positive in their school relationships. This is a collaborative partnership that we want to continue to hold and build on each year. Parent involvement is necessary if we are to be successful.

Our school supports Anne Henderson who recommends that principles on parent involvement programs:

1) Keep every aspect of the school open, helpful and friendly.
2) Maintain frequent and clear two-way communication with parents.
3) Encourage parents to comment on school policies and in some cases, to share in decision making.
4) Forge partnership with all families connected with the school; and
5) Promote parent and community volunteer participation.

The school's motto that we believe and practice is "A School Where Caring Really Counts." This motto stresses and enforces the need to work with parents as both groups care for the most important gift of a life, "kids!"

APPENDIX C

A Parent's Code of Ethics

I WILL establish a direct and personal contact with my child's school by visiting it and getting first-hand knowledge of its teaching activities and facilities.

I WILL demonstrate constructive attitudes towards the school and its programs, by supporting and cooperating with the teaching staff and the school board to the fullest possible extent.

I WILL make no criticism of the school without ensuring that I have accurate and first-hand information.

I WILL encourage a positive attitude on the part of my child and will refrain from criticism of the teachers or the school in his or her presence.

I WILL expect nothing for myself or for my child which is contrary to the interest of the entire school.

I WILL accept my share of responsibility for the partnership of home and school in the education of children.

I WILL provide conditions favourable to study at home.

I WILL cooperate with the school in developing and protecting the health and character of children.

I WILL seek to learn about educational aims and methods so that I may better understand my child's school.

The Canadian Home and School and Parent-Teacher Federation